

"New Mexico's biggest and best trout stream is the Rio Grande. From the New Mexico-Colorado boundary south for 80 miles this roaring river winds its tortuous ways through a 400-600 foot deep gorge of cliffs and boulders. The Rio Grande Box Canyon, as it is known, is truly a fabulous fishing water. The Northern 50 miles of it is a magnificent wild river, accessible only by foot trails except where one state road crosses it. Rainbow and brown trout abound there and attain great size—regularly 3-5 pounds, frequently to 8 pounds and occasionally up to 15 pounds or over. They are a wild, fighting trout in turbulent water to tax the angler's skill in an awe-inspiring setting".

The large springs pouring into the Rio Grand river 10-15 miles below the Colorado-New Mexico stateline reduce temperature variations and encourage an abundance of plant and animal life. These factors result in a high growth rate which produces the large fish for which the river is famed.

HIKING

The main attractions for the hiker are the fishing and the magnificent views of the canyon itself. The hiker also finds the area warmer and open earlier and later than most wilderness hiking areas in the state. Hiking groups such as the Los Alamos Outdoor Association and various Boy Scout troops make numerous trips into all areas. Hikers find the spectacular view while enroute more than ample compensation for the rather tedious drive they must make to reach the canyon rim.

FLOOD CONTROL ACT

The Flood Control Act of 1948 (P.L. 916) authorized a comprehensive plan for the development of the middle Rio Grande in New Mexico. The project was to consist of irrigation and drainage works, channel rectification, physical and financial rehabilitation of the irrigated and related areas, levees for local flood protection, and the construction or improvement of reservoirs. This was a joint project of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps of Engineers. Much of this work has already been done, including building Abiqui dam, and the start of Cochiti and Galisteo Dams.

One element of the plan, as originally proposed, was the Chiflo Dam, which would have been nearly in the middle of the proposed Wild River part of the Rio Grande, just above the confluence of Red River with the Rio Grande. This dam was not authorized as part of the Flood Control Act of 1948 because of objections on the part of Colorado and Texas. It was pointed out that there was ample flood control and irrigation storage already provided in the bill, and that the dam could not be justified for power generation because of the large amount of water which would have to be stored to make power generation feasible. About three-quarters of a million acre-feet of water would have had to be stored permanently behind the dam. About 60,000 acre-feet of water would have been lost to evaporation annually. Since the dam would have been solely for hydropower, the revenue to be expected from the dam would have been only about one-fifth of the annual cost of the dam.

These factors which resulted in the elimination of the Chiflo Dam from the original bill have, if anything, become even more important since the bill was passed in 1948. Other power sources have become more competitive and the water has become more valuable due to increasing population. Any further need for flood control in the future can be more satisfactorily accomplished by proper range and soil conservation management on the arroyos and tributaries emptying into the Rio Grande. The designation of this part of the river for Wild River status will in no way interfere with such activities on the Rio Grande watershed.

THE BIG BEND OF THE RIO GRANDE

It should be noted that northern New Mexico is not the only place where the Rio Grande should be designated a Wild and Scenic River, Senator Yarborough, of Texas, provided an amendment to the Senate-passed Wild Rivers Bill (S. 119) to include the Big Bend section of the Rio Grande, from Presidio to Langtry, Texas, as a river to be studied for possible future designation as a wild river. Part of this area is in Big Bend National Park. One can get some hint of the wild beauty of this region by looking at the thirty page article on Big Bend in the January 1968 issue of the *National Geographic Magazine* (Vol. 133, No. 1).